

## Christian-Muslim Interfaith Dialogue: A Study of the “World Congress of Faiths (WCF)”

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### Abstract

*The current research examines Christian-Muslims interfaith initiative through the three congresses of World Congress of Faiths (WCF). Highlighting the core theme of the Congress to work towards finding common values through dialogue among different faiths, it analyses the proceeding of the three congresses – 1936, 1937, 1938. Moving towards that, the paper examines the views of different participants from different faiths particularly Christians, Muslims, Ahmadi and Bahai faiths. It also studies the background of the Muslim participants due to certain suspicion from various quarters. While there was a great deal of understanding, respect, and mutual cooperation among faith leaders, it analyses how Muslim leaders failed to present their case. And lastly, interfaith dialogue is studied through Islamic lens to see if it was missionary motivated or it truly served the spirit of interfaith dialogue leading to harmony.*

**Keywords:** Christian-Muslim Interfaith Dialogue, Sir Francis Younghusband, World Congress of Faiths (WCF), Evaluation of first three congresses of WCF

### Introduction

World Congress of Faiths (WCF) is the pioneering interfaith movement which was established in Britain (London) in 1936.<sup>1</sup> Sir Francis Younghusband (1863-1942), a retired British Army Officer, a devout Anglican, and ‘the last great imperial adventurer’,<sup>2</sup> was the main figure at The Religions of Empire Conference held by the British Government in 1924 as part of the British Empire Exhibition. Queen Victoria expressed her desire for such a conference in one of her proclamations of ‘respecting other religions of the Empire’, issued in 1858 after the war of independence<sup>3</sup>. Sir Francis delivered the opening address at this congress, and claimed that ‘the ultimate basis on which the Empire would stand was religion’ i.e., Christianity<sup>4</sup>. Mirza Bashiruddin, *khalīfat al-masīh*, head of the Qadyāni (now Ahmadi) movement, attracted the greatest attention from the press on his arrival at Victoria station for the congress. The Baha’i representatives were also the subject of considerable interest, due to their ‘new religion’<sup>5</sup>.

Sir Francis remained the main source of inspiration behind the WCF movement, which seems to have been established as a continuation of the previous official mission aimed at understanding the various religions that prevailed within the British Empire. In his early life, Sir Francis entertained ‘some doubts about the virgin birth and physical resurrection and ascension of Jesus’. A visit to the Alps, where he listened to a sermon, however, dispelled these doubts. He was not fully satisfied with his religion, and his God, even in the later phases of his life, as they were too small: ‘I had a vision of a far greater religion yet to be, and of a God as much greater than our English God as a Himalayan giant is greater than an English hill’. Lately, he had some spiritual experience [probably after him being influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism] ‘of joy’ at Lhasa (Tibet), where he was commissioned by Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India to lead a mission to the Dalai Lama in 1903.<sup>6</sup> His mystical vision of the unity of all people in finding God, backed by the British government’s interest

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in religions of the Empire, led him to work day and night to resolve the matter. At the end he was successful in organizing the WCF, which held its first meeting in 1936 in London. The nature of God that he had been looking for, however, was never to be disclosed. This is evident from his forward that he wrote for the proceedings of the first WCF congress in 1936: "A point of great interest which was constantly recurring in the discussions was the Nature of God. No conclusion was reached and, of course, never will be. But what was noticeable was that through discussion and reflection the conception of God grew greater and greater in the minds of Members. He became ever more wonderful, ever more to be revered, ever closer, more intimate and more lovable".<sup>7</sup>

At the start of its life, the WCF organized three successful annual congresses: 1936 in London, 1937 in Oxford, and 1938 in Cambridge. People from various faiths participated in these conferences and presented their views. The break-out of war in 1939, however, restricted the work of the congress. To maintain communication with the scattered membership, a 'Chairman's Circular Letter' was started by Sir Francis, which by 1941 had progressed to a four-page pamphlet. In the third chairman's letter, referring to the disillusionment of youth with religion, Sir Francis insisted on a religious foundation for 'the New World Order'.<sup>8</sup> His death, however, clearly had an adverse effect on the movement. Herbert Samuel, one of the first Jewish members of the British cabinet, was elected Chairman of the executive committee of WCF after Sir Francis. Eventually, the independence of India in 1947 virtually blocked any Muslim participation from the two newly established countries.

In the period after the war, the WCF, and similar church organizations in the UK, noticed the presence of a sizeable number of immigrant Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others in Britain, and began to take keen interest in trying to understand their faiths, in order to foster an atmosphere of greater friendship and peace. At one of the WCF congresses, Dean Matthews in his sermon felt the need for contact with other religions with the hope that 'there may well be some divine revelation in other religions' from which the WCF might profit itself.<sup>9</sup> The MP Rev Reginald Sorensen, a Unitarian, and an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, who worked with the WCF for some time, stressed that common values could be found in each religion.<sup>10</sup> At the fiftieth anniversary congress (1986), WCF speakers defined dialogue, and the language of dialogue to be adopted.

Following the trend set by Sir Francis Younghusband, WCF continues to arrange seminars, conferences and much more: retreats, group travel, meditation weekends, and varied opportunities for people from different faiths and traditions to meet and appreciate one another's perspectives and insights. Emphasis is placed on visits to places of one another's worship and on meeting members of different faith communities.<sup>11</sup> Art, music and drama have also been introduced into WCF congresses for the sake of entertainment and relaxation between lectures. *Interreligious Insight* (previously *World Faith Encounters*), a journal published tri-annually introduces the WCF's interfaith pursuits, while '*One Family*' is its regular newsletter. Establishment of International Interfaith Centre (IIC) at Oxford in 1994, in collaboration with the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) and Westminster College (Oxford) is a further indication of the success of the WCF and reveals its wider and keen interest in understanding the world's religions.<sup>12</sup>

### Analysis of Muslim Participation in the WCF Congresses

The famous translator of the Qur'an, Abdullah Yusuf Ali (d.1953), participated in the first two sittings of the WCF. He was elected as member of the Continuation Committee formed in the 1936 congress, and the proceeding of the third meeting of the Congress held at Cambridge show him to be a member of the Executive Committee along with Sir Abdul Qadir.<sup>13</sup> The latter participated and made representations at all the three Congresses. In his opening address, '*The Essential Basis of Religion*', at the 1936 Congress, Abdullah Yusuf Ali urged world unity and brotherhood. In support of his plea, he related an experience he had with a Japanese Christian, whom he met while climbing up to a Buddhist monastery situated on a high hill. They had a discussion about different paths leading upwards, and then both chose the same one, upon which the Japanese said: 'Is not that the way of Divine things? The goal is one, but the paths to it are many'.

Yusuf Ali wanted to activate the spirit of sympathy, love and service that may be found in each human heart, but is often suppressed by baser motives. He was highly critical of internal Muslim sectarianism. He said: 'It seems to me strange that a Religion (and perhaps this is true about every religion) which entirely condemns sectarianism and preaches catholic unity, should have divisions which result in acrimonious disputes of this nature [*Sunnis and Shia's*].

Speaking of the British Christianity, Yusuf Ali expressed, 'I can say that I understand and respect the essential spirit of British Christianity. My guardian, when I came to England at an immature age for study, was a Christian Englishman in the highest sense of the term. I love and revere his memory'.....'I have studied the Christian religion as few Muslims have studied it. Although I am earnestly and sincerely devoted to my own religion and have striven both in writing and in speech to expound it, I have always advocated, and still advocate, the possibility and desirability of a better understanding between Muslims and Christians in all spheres of life. Such an understanding is likely to help us not only in our own Empire and in international relations generally, but I think it can also become a great guarantee of world peace and international understanding. The Holy Qur'an expressly says that the Christians are nearest in faith and friendship to the Muslims'.<sup>14</sup>

The son of His Eminence, Sheikh Mohammad Mustafa al-Marāghi, Rector of the Al-Azhar University, presented a paper entitled '*A Constructive proposal*' on behalf of his father. In it he elaborated that the idea of fellowship was natural just like the causes of dissension were natural. This was due to fact that man was not guided by reason only, but was impelled by certain animal instincts inherent in him, of which egoism, jealousy, fear and suspicion were a few leading examples. The only remedy to these factors was religion and not scientific and philosophical progress. Belief in a life-to-come, he said, was more enduring than this one; belief that good and evil are weighed in a just balance, the Balance of the All-Mighty, the All-Wise, urges man to the multiplication of good deeds and restrains him from the perpetration of evil. The Sheikh asked for the establishment of a Universal Fellowship of all the faiths for the purpose of the welfare of humanity and for bringing harmony between individuals and the Divine intention of Love. 'The appeal for the development of the common religious consciousness, he said, 'should be preceded by the establishment of fellowship between the Heads of Religions themselves. They are in a better position to realize its true significance and are more capable of understanding that the menace

threatening humanity does not arise from the differences in religions, but through atheism and the other creeds glorifying materialism, making light of the teachings of religions and regarding them as objects of derision’.

The Sheikh warned against any political interference in the process of the interfaith movement, which would ruin all. At the end he made it clear that Islam makes its appeal to reason and urges one to reflect on God’s creation. It exalts knowledge and learned people. It strongly recommends acts of charity and kindness, helping the weak, and the poor. It even urges kindness to animals, so much so that it made the Treasury responsible for the maintenance of stray animals. It considers a crime against a single individual a crime against humanity as a whole, and lays down stringent rules for the preservation of peace and order.<sup>15</sup>

Sir Abdul Qadir, Member of the Council of the Secretary of State of India, another prominent Muslim participant at the 1936 WCF Congress, spoke on *Islam and World Fellowship*. He told the Congress that Muslims are enjoined to respect all Messengers of God mentioned by name and those not named, alike, and to make no comparisons between them. The meaning of the Qur’anic term *kāfir*, according to him, was applying to all those not believing in any faith. He refuted all the ideas calling Islam the Religion of the Sword, which in fact, is the religion of peace. All those insisting upon this ideology were either ignorant or prejudiced. *Jihād* in Islam, he said was meant for defense only, and not for provoking war. Those who have adversely criticized the doctrine of *Jihād* have, curiously enough, ignored the emphasis laid by Islam on the kindly treatment of those who are vanquished in battle by the believers. The Qur’an, he said, does not confine its teaching to the preaching of peace and of kindly treatment of one’s neighbours, but it aims to destroy the barriers that divide humanity. He ended his speech by illustrating that the real difficulty of the world today is that it does not realize that the foundations of its belief have been undermined by skepticism, hence many doubt the existence of God and a life hereafter. The Qur’an will serve as the beacon light to guide erring humanity to a living belief in God.<sup>16</sup>

At the same Congress, Mr., A.R. Dard, a Qadyani Imam of the London Southfield mosque, in one of the discussion sessions said that God had spoken to Ghulam Ahmad of Qadyan, just like he spoke to other prophets and Saints. In his speech, he highlighted the words of Ghulam Ahmad: “the Lord of Heaven and Earth has sent me to bring the world back to God and His word and His Prophet, whom they had forsaken, and to preach His word to the nations and to lead them back into His kingdom and to bring back those that had become separated from Him, and to give faith to the faithless, eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf; and to heal those whose bodies had been corrupted by leprosy; and to raise the dead; and to awaken those that slumber; and to conciliate those that are disaffected; and to reform those that are corrupted; and to raise those that are fallen; and to look after those that are helpless; and to open the gates of the kingdom of Heaven unto those that are rejected”. Mr. Dard also publicly announced the prophecy made by Ghulam Ahmad of Qadyan, ‘who has prophesied’, he said “in spite of all opposition, world fellowship is going to be brought about by him, so that there may be peace and concord between the nations of the world”.<sup>17</sup>

*Bahauddin’s Ground Plan of World Fellowship* was read before the congress on behalf of his grandson Shoghi Effendi, also the Head of the Baha’i cause. This plan was based on the writings of Bahauddin, and presented by his son Abdul Baha in London, and in Paris, about a quarter of a century before the WCF congress, and was submitted to it for consideration.<sup>18</sup>

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Sir Abdul Qadir and Begum Sultan Mir Amiruddin were amongst the speakers of the 1937 congress of WCF, held at Oxford from July 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>. Begum Amiruddin, a leader of social and educational activities in India belonged to a distinguished Persian family, who had later settled in India. According to her, her father Muwayyid ul-Islam of Iran, a renowned scholar of the Arabic language and the Qur'ān had arranged for her the teaching of both the Old and the New Testament during her childhood.

Begum Amiruddin presented the Islamic view on '*Religion: Its Value to the World*'. She said that the kernel of the world problems lies not in the human head but in the human heart. True religion, as distinguished from pseudo-religion, is basically universalistic in spirit and teaching. The basic principle of Islam, she explained, is its doctrine of universal Brotherhood. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) made it his life work to preach universal love as the emblem of the love towards Creator. "Do you love your Creator?", he said, "love your fellow-being first".

Commenting upon different theologies and on the term *madhhab*, she said that the various religions differ one from another, not in their inward essence but in their outward manifestations- in theological details. Underneath variety, that which binds all men together is the fundamental unity of their allegiance to the great ultimate spirit of Reality and Truth and the similitude of their spiritual aspirations. The Arabic term for religion is *madhhab*, which denotes a path. The followers of the different faiths are all fellow-pilgrims who, though pursuing diverse paths, are marching towards one and the same "far-off divine event, towards which the whole creation moves".

Sir Abdul Qadir was the sole Muslim speaker in 1938 WCF Congress. The topic for this congress was '*The Renaissance of Religion*' in which he presented the Muslim perspective. Moulvi Aftabuddin Ahmad, *imām* of the Woking mosque conducted the Muslim service at this conference.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, Dr. Zaki Badawi, Dr. Ya'qub Zaki and Dr. Muhammad Mashuq ibn Ally have been prominent Muslim participants in letter WCF congresses.

## Discussion

If one were to analyze Christian-Muslim relations in the light of the first three important congresses of WCF, it appears that there was a great deal of understanding, respect and mutual cooperation. Firm foundations were laid for future bilateral dialogue, which could not be sustained with the same spirit due to various political and non-political reasons.

Muslim participants in these congresses were mainly those who, in one way or another, were closely associated with British Imperialism, and were not representatives of the Muslim community in the broader context. Some of them are still regarded as suspects by some Muslims. For instance, while Abdullah Yusuf Ali is praised by Muslims and others for his translation of the Qur'an, his close ties with the British Government are frowned upon by many Muslims. Zafar Bangash, a Pakistani scholar writes: '..... he died in London on December 10, 1953'..... 'Disoriented and confused, he was found by the police lying outside the steps of a house. Taken to the hospital, he died unsung and unmourned'.....'The translation is no mean achievement but it is clear that despite his efforts, ultimately Yusuf Ali had learned nothing from the Qur'an. That is the greatest tragedy of his life'.<sup>20</sup>

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's silent approval of the view of religions of the Japanese tourist, as he described it by 'different paths leading to the same destination on top of mountain' does not tally with Qur'anic teachings, which informs us about one straight road "*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*" to reach the destination, as other paths will lead elsewhere. This theory of Monotheism in pluralism propagated earlier by Sir Francis, leader of the caravan<sup>21</sup>, was also adopted by Sir Abdul Qadir in his erroneous interpretation of the Qur'anic term *kāfir*, and by Begum Sultan Mir Amiruddin in her understanding of 'different religions' by *madhāhib*, which she claimed to be the Arabic term for 'religion'. All this, however, is not consistent with the Qur'anic contexts, and neither has the term *madhhab* ever occurred in the Qur'an.<sup>22</sup> It can be observed that the Muslim participants of these congresses adopted an apologetic attitude, and did not, satisfactorily present Islam's views on pluralism, neither did they make any comment on Dard's spurious claim of presenting Ghulam Ahmad as a new prophet, nor of Bahaullah's heresy.

From a Muslim perspective, three interesting points of theses congresses were;

1. WCF maintained its official recognition of Ghulam Ahmad of Qādyān and Bahaullah, extended to them through the Religions of Empire conference held by the British government in London in 1924. This conveyed an impression of 'attacking Islam by confusing it', and of promoting sectarianism within the Muslim community. As shown by the Islamophobia document of the Runnymede Trust, public hatred towards Islam and Muslims in Britain has actually increased over the past years. Qādyānis (now Ahmadis) also have managed to propagate their new religion, labeled as Islam, to the whole world via a satellite channel established in London.
2. In the very first congress, Dr. K.M. Ahmad objected to the erroneous term 'Mahomedan' used for Muslims by Christians. His objection was faithfully recorded (*Proceedings*, P.175), but his request was not taken on board, as the proceedings of all the three congresses persisted in using the same term. Misconceptions of this kind about Islam are held mainly by Orientalists, who unfortunately, are often antagonistic towards Islam, rather than being impartial, and are inclined to misinterpret and distort the actual meaning of parts of the Qur'an. For example Geoffry Parrinder<sup>23</sup> writes: "Muhammad was 'the prophet of his community' (*al-nabi al-ummi*)", and: "[Qur'an] 19:34-35 reads: "that is Jesus, son of Mary – a statement of the truth concerning which they are in doubt'. It has been remarked that with a slight change of vowel, this 'statement of truth' (*qawla l-ḥaqqi*) could be read as 'word of truth' (*qawlu l-ḥaqqi*), namely, that Jesus is the word of truth concerning which men are in doubt. Since the original Qur'an had no vowelizing there is ambiguity in the reading; in addition there are numerous variants of this verse in old versions of the Qur'an". Parrinder, in the first place, tries to explain away the meaning of the Arabic term *ummi*, which here denotes 'unlettered'. According to the Qur'an (7:158) Muhammad (*ṣallallāhu 'alyhi wa sallam*) is the messenger of God for the entire mankind: "Say: Mankind, for all of you I am but a Messenger from God....". In the second place, he raises doubts about the Qur'anic

text by assuming that due to non-availability of vowels, confusion was created about reading of the Scripture. This observation is misleading and goes against the basic rules pertaining to the science of various readings of the Qur'an (*'ilm al-Qirā'āt*) approved by the Prophet himself, and safeguarded by millions of Muslims in their memories, as well as on paper. Certainly, both the reading (*qawla l-ḥaqqi/qawlu l-ḥaqqi*) have been recorded, but *qawla l-ḥaqqi* never meant that Jesus is the word of truth. Such an interpretation would require an Arabic text *'Issā al-ḥaqq*, and the like. Rather, what Jesus said about himself reported in the preceding verses (19:30-33) is truth., i.e. *'innī 'abdullāhi* (onwards) 'I am servant of God' [not son of God, as Christians say, not of Joseph, as the Jews accused Mary to be involved with him].<sup>24</sup>

3. The WCF tried to promote spirituality by arranging worship services of people of all 'faiths' participating in these conferences. This pattern is still followed by the WCF in its various 'special gatherings'.<sup>25</sup> The Qur'an however strongly disapproves such type of worships. According to it, God should be worshipped the way He has taught through His messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (*ṣallallāhu 'alyhi wa sallam*).

Subsequent Muslim participation in the WCF congresses and their approach towards interfaith dialogue has been viewed with mixed feelings; according to Zaki Badawi, every religious community considers its belief as final, as 'no religious community can allow itself to float in the empty space of uncertainty', and that 'Muslims accept differences of belief as a fulfillment of the Will of Allah', 'If He so willed He would have made you unto one religious community'.<sup>26</sup> This attitude of throwing the responsibility on Allah, however, was adopted by the Polytheists, as described by the Qur'an in 43:20: "They say: 'If (God) the Mercy-giving had so wished, we would not have worshipped them (false deities). Of that they have no knowledge! They do nothing but mere guessing". While Ya'qūb Zaki has expressed his dissatisfaction on the whole issue of Christian-Muslim dialogue; he said: 'dialogue, I grow over more convinced, is an exercise in futility'.....'Islam, as a post Christian religious system, is from a Christian perspective ipso facto false, and Christianity in Muslim eyes can never be more than a superseded religion'.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

- Interfaith dialogue has evolved over the years, and has been influenced to some degree by missionary activities and political interests of Christians. The conceptual reason for this is that the Qur'an and the ḥadīth have issued specific guidelines to Muslims on how to conduct their affairs with Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims, known to all. On the contrary, the New Testament contains no such details with regard to Muslims, and therefore, it is hard to clearly identify Christian objectives in interreligious dialogues. This conceptual difference is of fundamental importance and can be observed in the activities of WCF and other interfaith organizations.
- While missionary motivations have been dominant in the dialogue, the announcement of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the 'decade of evangelism' by the Church has further enhanced this state of affairs.<sup>28</sup>

- Although, interreligious dialogue permits each individual to stick to his/her own faith, yet this foundation is not firm enough to achieve any lasting solution to the problems, as the religious pluralism that it embodies clearly encourages participants to ignore basic theological differences. This, however, is unacceptable to Islam<sup>29</sup>. Further, the Muslim concept of life based on the teachings of Qur'ān and sunnah clearly differs from that adopted by the secular West. Due to such reasons, the dialogue often ceases to be objective; instead it may become dictatorial rather than being based on mutual understanding. For instance, despite claiming impartiality, it may seek to dictate values, notions regarding human rights, freedom of expression<sup>30</sup> and the necessary imposition of a secular viewpoint. It is, therefore, hardly astonishing to note that the gaps between Christian-Muslim understanding in the past thirty years have been widened, rather than bridged.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed history of WCF, see Braybrooke, *Faiths in Fellowship* and, *A Wider Vision: A History of the World Congress of Faiths*, also McConnell, H., *A Venture of Faith for All Faiths*.

<sup>2</sup> One of Sir Francis' adventures' relates to Kashmir, where he spent a number of years, and was in close friendship with Pratap Singh. Sir Francis dedicated his book *Kashmir* to him.

<sup>3</sup> Condescendingly referred to by the British as the 'Indian Mutiny'.

<sup>4</sup> According to Sir Francis, *A Venture of Faith*, 17-18, Christianity is the only religion for salvation. He however does not approve a God who punishes; rather he is in favour of 'simple Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount'. Sir Francis, in his speech made some interesting remarks, he believed that the British Empire had been strictly impartial in its dealings with all!, see Hare, W.L., (ed.), *Religions of the Empire, a conference on some living religions within the Empire*, held at London, 1929, 15-16.

<sup>5</sup> Braybrooke, Marcus, *A Wider Vision, A History of the World Congress of Faiths*, 8-12. It is worth mentioning that the Head of the Qadyanis, Ghulam Ahmad, had helped British Imperialism in maintaining 'peace' in India by issuing a fatwa denouncing jihad. Other speakers on 'Islam' at the Religions of the Empire Conference include: Professor Margoliouth, Khwaja Kamaluddin, Mustafa Khan, Sheikh Kadhim El-Dojaily (shī'a representative), Sir Patrick Fagan and ṣūfī Hafiz Raushan Ali (ṣūfī representative).

<sup>6</sup> Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope*, 63-65. Sir Francis in his *God and the Universe*, 15-16 being much impressed by the scientific advances, outlines the following concept of God: "The God which a contemplation of the universe as revealed by science and by most intimate spiritual experience of our highest manifests is as far above the old Abrahamic God of our childhood as the most perfect saint is above a schoolboy.....This is, to me, is the God that the Universe declares. And my conception of Him only deepens and expands as the revelations of science multiply and increase in wonder, and as my own experience accumulates. The great days of God are only beginning to dawn". As is apparent, the Bible does not say much about science; rather it is the Qur'an which consistently refers to scientific and other phenomena, related to the layout of the earth and the rest of the universe, as signs of God to be pondered upon, and as means to seek and find Him, see for instance āyāt 27:60-66.

<sup>7</sup> Millard, A.D., (ed.) *Faiths and Fellowship, being the proceedings of the World Congress of Faiths* held in London, July 3<sup>rd</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 1936, 11.

<sup>8</sup> Braybrooke, *A Wider Vision*, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 69; sermon of Dean Matthews for WCF (point no.4).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 77-78.

<sup>11</sup> For details, see Ibid, 106-116.

<sup>12</sup> For further information see, <http://www.worldfaiths.org/>, official website of the WCF.

<sup>13</sup> WCF (published for) *The Renaissance of Religion, being the proceedings of the third meeting of the world congress of faiths*, ix. Sir Francis (*A Venture of Faiths*, 49) wanted Sir Mohammad Iqbal to be the chief Muslim participant in the first WCF congress, but could not persuade him for participation.

<sup>14</sup> Millard, A.D., (ed.), 13-25.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 344-56.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 157-72.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 338-41.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 299-317.

<sup>19</sup> *The Renaissance of Religion*, 53-67.

<sup>20</sup> See his review in *Renaissance*, 25-29.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Francis may have adopted this idea from Hindu thought. This observation is strengthened by his statement in his book '*A Venture of Faith*', 18, where he says: "I had very intimate personal relationship with Hindu Maharajas, Ministers and Pundits.....From converse with these holy men and the study with them of their sacred books, I felt myself catching the true inner spirit of religion". Hence in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna proclaims, "Whatever path men travel is my path, No matter where they walk it leads to Me". (*Bhagavad Gita* 4.11, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, 51). The same theory of "all religions are the same" was presented more strongly by Toynbee (1889-1975) and now by Hick, J. See Knitter, P.F., *No other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitude towards the World Religions*, 37-44 and 146-152.

<sup>22</sup> Calling different religions to be similar to the Islamic *madhāhib* is a primitive idea, which originated among the *ṣūfis* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. For details, see Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, volume: xxxv, 188.

<sup>23</sup> Parrinder, G., *Jesus in the Qur'an*, 38 and 46.

<sup>24</sup> For details on these āyāt, see al-Qurtubi, *al-Jāmi' li- Ahkām al-Qur'an*, vol:11, 71-72.

<sup>25</sup> Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope*, 83-85 on interfaith worship.

<sup>26</sup> Zaki Badawi, *World Faiths Insights*, New Series (13) 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ya'qub Zaki, *World Faiths Insights*, New Series (23) 10.

<sup>28</sup> See, Siddiqui, Ataullah, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, 72-78 for the details.

<sup>29</sup> For recent issues of the interfaith dialogue, see [http://www.the.americanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/interfaith\\_dialogue\\_issues/](http://www.the.americanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/interfaith_dialogue_issues/)

<sup>30</sup> For the Islamic concept of free expression, see Kamali, M.H., *Freedom of Expression in Islam*.

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